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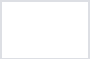
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Climate change vote: Pelosi's green gamble

BY JARED ALLEN AND MOLLY K. HOOPER - 06/23/09 8:35 PM ET



Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) is moving forward with a floor vote on climate change legislation this week even though many Democrats are undecided on the controversial bill.

Pelosi's gamble to schedule a Friday vote is one of the riskiest moves she has made as Speaker. There are at least eight Democrats who are firm "no" votes, while many others are on the fence (see chart page 14).

In an indication that Democrats lack the necessary votes to pass it on their side of the aisle, Pelosi and other party leaders have met with centrist Republicans seeking their support.

Pelosi and Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) — in coordination with the White House — decided on Monday night to file the bill with the Rules Committee. That surprise move has set up a vote-counting showdown by the end of the week.

Democratic aides said leaders had been building up to this decision as they monitored negotiations between Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson (D-Minn.) over the weekend.

At press time, Waxman and Peterson emerged from a meeting with the Blue Dog Coalition and announced that they reached an agreement.



"We have something that I think works for agriculture," Peterson said.

The crux of the deal is a concession from Waxman to allow the Department of Agriculture — not the Environmental Protection Agency — to develop and monitor offset and land use provisions the legislation creates.

"I think we will have the majority necessary to pass the bill," Waxman said.

The Energy and Commerce Committee chairman said he would still be speaking to members of the Democratic Caucus to convince wary Democrats to vote yes.

"I'm going to continue to talk to members who've heard negative things about this bill from groups who are now going to support the bill," he said.

Hoyer on Tuesday morning said, "If we didn't have agreement and we didn't have the votes, then we probably wouldn't go forward."

On the other side of the Capitol, Senate Majority Leader [Harry Reid](#) (D-Nev.) is taking steps to avoid friction from senators from farm states on climate change (see related story).

The climate change battle in the House is unique because Pelosi usually has to lean on liberals or centrist Democrats to get the votes she needs on hard-to-pass legislation. But the cap-and-trade measure has attracted skepticism from both factions.

Reps. Lacy Clay (D-Mo.) and Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Texas), who are members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), say they are not yet sold on the bill.

A vote-counter for the CBC, Rep. [G.K. Butterfield](#) (D-N.C.) explains that his colleagues are "reluctant to give a firm commitment until they can be satisfied that it will not disproportionately affect minority families."

"It's hard ... in these economic times for us to say, 'Bite the bullet' and have higher utility bills in the winter and the summer," Clay told The Hill.

Butterfield is calling on President Obama to become more involved.

"Now it's time for the president to become more vocal, because he has a tremendous gift of communication and he needs to communicate with the American people," Butterfield said.

Expected "no" votes from Democrats include Reps. Jason Altmire (Pa.), [John Barrow](#) (Ga.), Bobby Bright (Ala.), Artur Davis (Ala.), [Jim Matheson](#) (Utah), Charlie Melancon (La.), Mike Ross (Ark.) and Gene Taylor (Miss.).

Democrats who are undecided or on the fence include Reps. Neil Abercrombie (Hawaii), Henry Cuellar (Texas), Travis Childers (Miss.), Walt Minnick (Idaho) and Tom Perriello (Va.).

Republicans are anxious for the battle on the floor. The National Republican Congressional Committee sent out a fundraising letter on Tuesday stating, "Cap-and-trade is nothing more than a tax which starts accruing the moment you flip on your light switch. This 'light switch tax' will raise energy costs by hundreds of dollars for the average family and between 1.8 and 7 million American jobs could be lost."

Most Republicans will reject the climate bill. Rep. Mary Bono Mack (Calif.) was the only GOP member on the Energy and Commerce Committee to back it.

Reps. Mike Castle (R-Del.) and Vernon Ehlers (R-Mich.) are undecided on the measure.

The League of Conservation Voters, an environmental group that is an active player in political campaigns, stated on Tuesday that it would not endorse any member of the House who opposed the climate bill.

Michael M. Gleeson and Jim Snyder contributed to this article.

TAGS G.K. BUTTERFIELD HARRY REID JIM MATHESON JOHN BARROW

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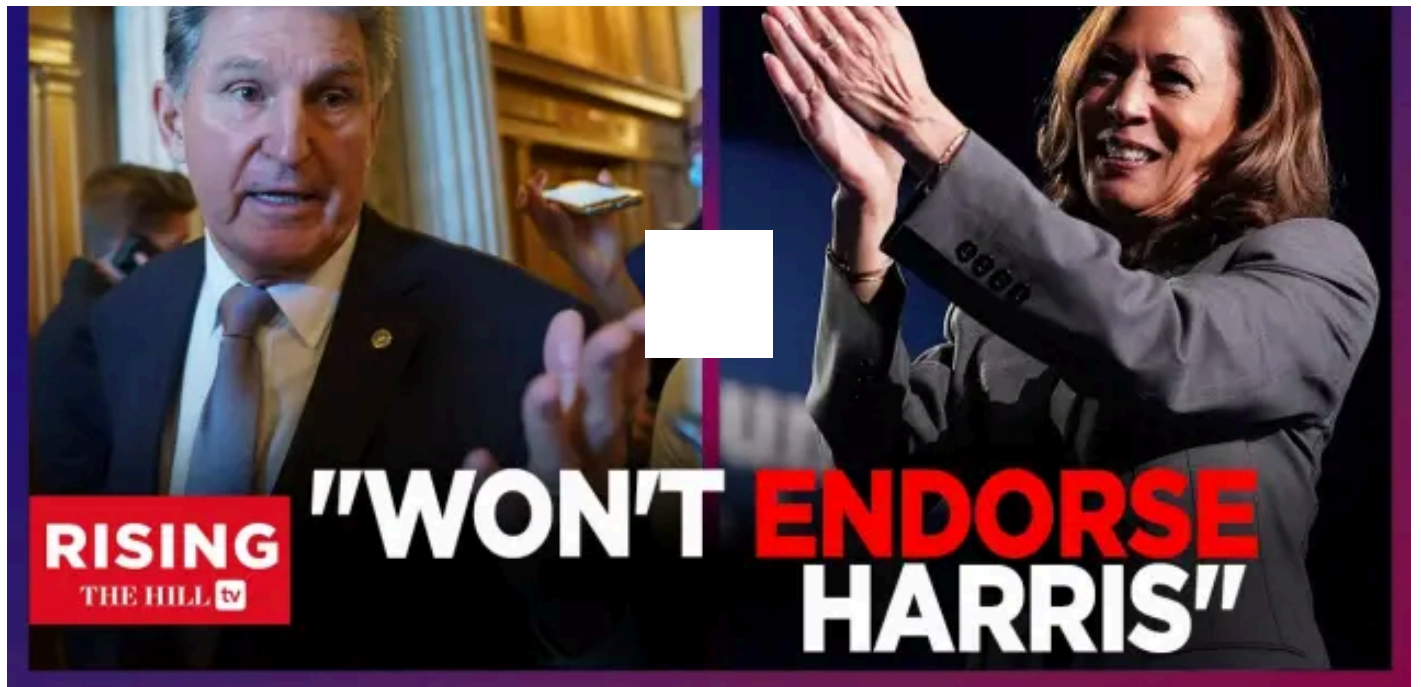


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